

Minutes of the RHIC/AGS Users' Group
Executive Committee Meeting
06 June 2003

Present: Steve Pate, Gary Westfall, Mike Murray, Vicki Greene, Brant Johnson, Susan White-DePace, Mike Sivertz, Glenn Young, Carol Scarlett, Mike Sivertz, Stephen Johnson

The meeting was held in Berkner Hall, room D and began at 11:45am EST.

Announcements:

- Gary Westfall has been elected as the Chair-elect. Vicki appointed Glenn Young as a member.

Chair's Presentation (see posting on web page):

- Goals of the current UEC: (1) Enable users, removing obstacles to work; (2) Support students and postdocs; (3) Help funding officers make strong case to agencies.
- Terms of members set to officially expire on June 30th will be extended to September 30th.
- Committees:
 - Research Support (previously Public Affairs)
 - Users meeting
 - Thesis
 - Computing
 - By-laws
 - Quality of life
 - Non U.S. Visitors (previously Visas, Foreign Visitors, Immigration and Security)
- We discussed if the infrastructure is already in place at the laboratory to address career promotion and education of graduate students and postdocs. For example, there is a mentoring program for BNL employees and The Association of Students and Postdocs provides some of this education. Susan White-DePace agreed to look into what is available in order to make sure this important issue is already being addressed at the lab and, if not, what we can do about it.
- An incomplete subcommittee membership list was presented. Vicki is looking for members to volunteers for those committees of interest to them over the following week.
- Each subcommittee should define one large issue it will tackle this year and will present their idea at the next meeting.
- We plan to hold Users Meetings at some of the scientific meetings throughout the year. To begin, we will look to holding them at the APS and DNP meetings.
- Visits to DC and letter writing campaigns
 - Will it be more fruitful to organize our efforts with Jeff Lab/FNAL/SLAC?

- We should divide up according to constituency as we discuss with our representatives since this will have the largest impact.
- Should we plan on two meetings with our representatives, as constituents and a Users Committee?
- Users Meeting postmortem:
 - The meeting suffered from a low budget and low registered attendance. There were also some criticisms of the format of the meeting and the details of some talks.
 - Brant Johnson and Vicki Greene met with Peter Paul regarding the Users meeting and discussed issues of funding, format and timing. Some of the conclusions of that meeting and subsequent thoughts are:
 - We should coordinate our users meeting with that of the NSLS to lure funding agency representatives and politicians to the laboratory. The NSLS will hold their meeting 17th-19th of May (Monday – Wednesday). We will plan to hold a meeting May 20th-21st. Perhaps we can hold a joint users meeting with them on Wednesday, though that may not be a good time of the week for congressional representatives.
 - The NSLS has corporate sponsors, vendors, and a registration fee that provide ~\$80K for their users meeting requiring no extra support from the lab. However, we rely completely on the lab for support and receive ~\$3.5K each year. Can we get vendor support for our meeting? How does FNAL fund their users meeting?
 - NSLS has a three-day meeting with workshops on the 1st and 3rd days, which leads to higher attendance. On the other hand, FNAL has a two-day meeting with no parallel sessions but with science talks interspersed with political talks to boost attendance. What will work best for us?
 - Next year we must be sure to mail the posters, which were already made, to all participating institutions.

Mike Sivertz suggested a “Town Meeting” every 3-4 months where the users could bring issues or concerns to the Users Committee to have them vetted. We will time the first of these meetings with our October meeting to coincide with the beginning of physics running at RHIC. We need to develop a different name for this than “Town Meeting” since that term is politically loaded.

Susan White-DePace outlined the procedure for visitor processing at the lab. A first time user needs to register online well before they ever visit the lab. They receive welcome information and directions via email immediately and, once their visit has been approved, they receive directions again. Immediately before their first visit, they receive directions a third time. Still some people are showing up without proper paperwork complete and need to be either sent home or placed in temporary housing offsite while their paperwork is quickly processed by Susan’s office. There is some confusion with foreign nationals as they cannot work at BNL with a tourist visa and yet, since they are not being paid by Brookhaven, they are often denied a work visa due to a misunderstanding. Susan’s office

tries to make this clear in the directions they send to foreign visitors, but some still show up without proper visas.

For a renewal of a current appointment, the user receives an email 90 days prior to expiration and is asked only to correct what is wrong. If this is done within 30 days, the approval process is complete well before the expiration of their appointment. However, they are also notified at both 60 and 30 days prior to their appointment expiration if they have not completed the renewal process.

Mike Sivertz initiated a discussion on foreign nationals. Foreign national scientists have told him that the DOE required procedures are overly onerous. For example, Susan's office is required to note every time a visitor changes their visa status. We need a clearer idea of what needs to be changed addressing:

- What can be handled locally without impacting DOE or the visitors.
- What are nuisances we simply need to live with given the current international situation.
- Which issues are especially burdensome on the visitors.
- What we have a chance of changing and we should lobby for.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30pm EST.